

# Old Town Hall Update

## CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERS OPTIONS

ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING PIECES OF architecture from Bloomington's 19th century, Old Town Hall was once the community's assembly place for public meetings, church services and social gatherings. While still in sound condition, attention is needed to preserve the 1892 building and identify its long-term uses.

Through meetings, petitions, e-mails and an online survey,

Bloomington residents have expressed overwhelming support for saving Old Town Hall. In January 2004, the City Council hired SMSQ Architects to conduct a reuse study for retaining Old Town Hall and to prepare a plan that would:

- Fit well with site constraints and the changing uses in the neighborhood.
- Be cost-effective for Bloomington taxpayers.



- Preserve Old Town Hall as a reminder of Bloomington's history.
- Establish the building as a citywide landmark and neighborhood-gathering place.

## A NEW LIFE FOR OLD TOWN HALL

SMSQ Architects, a Northfield consulting architecture firm, has conducted more than a dozen studies of notable buildings and restored many more. After inspecting the structure, gathering community input and consulting with experts, SMSQ identified five potential reuses for Old Town Hall:



### Bloomington Historical Society Museum

The Bloomington Historical Society plays an important role in gathering the stories and artifacts of the community. To meet the City Council's reuse goals, the organization would have to expand its programs, hours and funding sources.



### Youth Coffeehouse

Bloomington's Youth Coffeehouse Initiative would be a good fit because of its location between two public high schools. However, the space needs of the program probably can't be met on this site because of limited parking.



### Destination Coffeehouse

Dozens of interviewees and survey respondents suggested a destination coffeehouse that could be the 21st century equivalent of the original community gathering place. *See left.*



### Welcome Center

Old Town Hall could become a welcome center dispensing community information and offering historical research and heritage tours.



### Mixed Use

A mixed use would form a partnership that would include elements of the four uses described above.



The Smith-Douglas-More House in Eden Prairie is an example of a public-private partnership reusing a historic property. This 1877 farmhouse houses a coffee shop that partners with a local historical entity.

## RESTORATION OF A CITY JEWEL

To pave the way for any reuse, SMSQ recommended that the City Council adopt the following three-step physical restoration process:

### 1 STABILIZATION

Stabilize the Old Town Hall's exterior to prevent the loss of historic materials. Critical repairs must alleviate current structural problems.

Cost: \$150,000 to \$175,000.

### 2 RESTORATION

Restore Old Town Hall's exterior to its 1930s appearance by reinstating the wood clapboard exterior and recreating the bell tower.

Cost: \$175,000 to \$225,000.

### 3 REUSE IMPROVEMENTS

Enhance the building and surrounding area to prepare for a new use to include an accessible entrance addition, remodeled restrooms, site landscaping and exterior features.

Cost: \$425,000 to \$550,000.

The report recommends seeking proposals from tenants who would provide an active mix of uses attractive to youth, tourists and residents.

SMSQ's recommendations were presented to the City Council in September. The Council directed staff to proceed with stabilization and requested a definitive timeline so that restoration, reuse improvements and selection of building tenant(s) could be tied together and implemented in 2005.

For the complete report, visit our Web site at [www.ci.bloomington.mn.us](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us), keywords: Old Town Hall.



This rendering shows how the building could look if fully restored. Exterior enhancements include adding an accessible entrance on the west side, replacing the bell tower and restoring the original clapboard siding as well as landscape restoration, parking expansion, outdoor seating and a patio.

# 2005 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

## COUNCIL APPROVES PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND LEVY

THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVED A preliminary general operating fund budget of \$45,108,516, a 5.26 percent increase from the 2004 budget of \$42,853,808.

The Council also approved a preliminary levy of \$36,091,897 for 2005, a 5.75 percent increase from 2004. Again having to anticipate the loss of market value credit and local government aid from the state in 2005, the Council increased the levy to offset these losses. The budget-balancing burden will shift to municipalities across Minnesota, as the state, in order to help solve its ongoing budget problems, will again have to cut these aids.

The preliminary levy can be reduced, but not increased, before final adoption in December. The City has traditionally made a reduction between preliminary and final levy adoption. If the 2005 levy increase is approved, the average annual increase in the City's levy from 1994 - 2005 will be 2.96 percent.

Residential properties averaged an 8.75 percent increase in market value in 2004. The median home in Bloomington is valued at \$214,400, up \$18,600 from 2003. Cost for City services in 2005 will be under \$58 per month for the average Bloomington homeowner.

City staff uses a five-year planning model that considers both short-term and future needs of our community to recommend a preliminary levy. Note: The Truth in Taxation Hearing is Monday, December 6, at 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

## NEW ON THE WEB SITE

### BUILDING PERMIT STATUS

RESIDENTS AND CONTRACTORS CAN now go to the City's Web site to determine the status of their building permits. Just enter a valid permit number for a status report from the previous business day. Visit [www.ci.bloomington.mn.us](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us), keywords: Permit status.

### PENDING SPECIAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

The City's Web site also has a listing of special assessments adopted by the City Council, current to the previous business day. Visit [www.ci.bloomington.mn.us](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us), keywords: Pending assessments.